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Challenges Faced by National and International Christian English Teachers in Honduras

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Abstract

This qualitative study explored the challenges faced by national and international Christian English teachers in Honduras. There is an identified need for empirical studies which include a broader range of participants outside of North American teachers working in international contexts (Kubanyiova, 2013; Loptes, 2009). Data were gathered from 44 teachers through an online questionnaire and individual and focus group interviews. Three categories emerged through the analysis of the data: 1) social challenges and strategies related to living in Honduras, 2) professional challenges and strategies related to lack of support, and 3) the role of faith in teachers' personal and professional lives. This study is important as it includes the voices of both national and international Christian teachers, in a country with significant educational and societal challenges. More research is required to explore the challenges faced by Christian English teachers worldwide and to address how to support these teachers in both their professional and personal journeys.

Key words: Christianity and ELT, Honduras, national and international teachers, teacher experience

Introduction

In the past decade, Christian English teachers have come under significant scrutiny by many within the TESOL community for a variety of reasons. Varghese and Johnston (2007) discuss the dilemma between the Christian tenets of witnessing and conversion and the view that teachers should not attempt to impose their beliefs on students. Teachers have been criticized for using their role as teachers as a cover for their real purpose of evangelism (Pennycook & Coutand-Marin, 2003). There is also a great deal of debate around historical and present-day associations between English language teaching and questions of linguistic imperialism (see Canagarajah, 2009, for an overview of these criticisms). Yet, while various criticisms have been laid against Christian English teachers, very little research has documented the experience of Christian English teachers around the world. Both Loptes (2009) and Kubanyiova (2013) argue for more empirical studies about Christian language educators and their practices. Kubanyiova calls for a broader range of participants, as studies have often focused on North American

evangelical Christians who are employed in developing countries and teach English as a platform for missionary work. The focus primarily on North American English teachers working in other countries is especially problematic in light of Snow's (2007) claim that the majority of English language teachers are non-native speakers who teach in their home country. Additionally, non-native English teachers have often been marginalized within the profession as employers show preference to international native speakers (Dormer, 2011). Research which includes a broader range of participants, especially non-native Christian English teachers, provides a needed opportunity to hear the voices of teachers who have not yet been adequately represented thus far.

In sum, while many criticisms have been laid against Christian English teachers, scarce research documents the challenges they face in their specific contexts. The present study addressed this research gap within the Honduran context by documenting the challenges experienced by national and international Christian teachers in their personal and professional lives. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the primary personal and professional challenges experienced by national and international Christian English teachers in Honduras?
2. Do national and international teachers experience and address these challenges differently and if so, in what ways?

By exploring the personal and professional challenges faced by national and international Christian teachers in Honduras, this study brings new perspectives to the current debates on the intersection of Christianity and English language teaching.

Literature Review

The focus of this study was the challenges faced by national and international Christian English teachers in Honduras. This study drew from literature focused in three main areas: 1) the educational context of Honduras, 2) international teachers' experiences in Honduras, and 3) challenges related to adjustment for international and national workers and teachers.

Within the context of Honduras, very little research has focused on English teachers, though the teaching of English is rapidly growing both within the public and private sectors. There are over 800 elementary and secondary English-Spanish bilingual schools in Honduras (Secretaria de Educación de Honduras, 2016). As well, there are hundreds of teachers providing private lessons or teaching English within public and private universities. The Honduran Ministry of Education recently mandated English classes for all public schools, which

substantially increased the number of English language teachers. This desire for increased English at all educational levels is important to note in a country which suffers from low student achievement despite movements for educational reforms throughout the region (Di Gropello, 2005). Forty-seven and a half percent of Grade 1 to 9 students are considered at risk of dropping out (UNICEF, 2013). Dormer (2011) describes a potential challenge in contexts where a country's desire for English instruction outpaces their supply of effective teachers, and some people might say this is the case in the context of Honduras.

While Honduras has significant educational challenges and a rapidly increasing role of English language within this sector, unfortunately no published research has been found which documents the experience of national and international Christian English teachers in this geographical context. However, through an extensive search, two articles were found that consider the experience of international teachers in Honduras. In a historical overview of bilingual education in Honduras, Alley (1996) describes the experience of international teachers in large bilingual schools. Though not an empirical study, Alley (1996) outlines three main areas of concern: 1) exploitative school practices contributing to high turn-over rate, 2) a high degree of variability and lack of accountability in programs, resources and facilities, and 3) unqualified teachers and lack of teacher training. While Alley presents a fairly dire picture of the state of bilingual education in Honduras, the article is limited in scope as it focuses solely on the experience of international teachers within large bilingual schools. Hooley (2005) describes his personal experience teaching for one year at a large Christian bilingual school in Honduras. While Hooley describes some challenges, such as frequent electrical outages and the impact of different cultural norms in the classroom, his article does not provide a critical reflection of his experience. While Alley (1996) and Hooley (2005) provide some insight into the Honduran context, both authors focus primarily on the experience of foreign teachers in large bilingual schools, a very narrow sector of English teachers in Honduras.

While scarce research exists on the experience of teachers in Honduras, other researchers have identified specific challenges commonly faced by international and national workers adjusting to novel situations. Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou (1991) developed a Framework of International Adjustment which outlines a process by which international workers adjust to their new work and living environments and the potential challenges they face in this process. While Black et al. (1991) originally designed their framework for persons travelling overseas for

employment, the authors drew from both domestic and international adjustment literature to create their framework and therefore it can be applied to this study regarding the challenges faced by both national and international teachers. The original framework includes two major areas of adjustment: anticipatory adjustment and in-country adjustment. This study focused on the in-country adjustment factors of the framework, which include three Degrees of Adjustment: 1) work adjustment, 2) interaction adjustment and 3) general adjustment. Work adjustment includes both one's role within their professional role, as well as the organizational culture of their place of employment. Interaction adjustment refers to interactions with others within a work setting, while general adjustment includes all factors outside of the work environment, such as living conditions and family life. According to the authors, while all three factors apply to international workers, they also apply to domestic work changes, though work adjustment would likely be the most significant factor.

Black et al.'s (1991) framework has been adapted by other researchers to explore the experience of international teachers. Roskell (2013) uses the framework to explore the experience of 12 international teachers working at a school in South East Asia. In her study, Roskell (2013) identifies the challenges of the teachers according to 1) host culture characteristics, 2) relationships, and 3) work characteristics. While Roskell's (2013) study focuses solely on international teachers, participants identify similar personal and professional challenges to those outlined in Black et al.'s (1991) framework.

While Black et al. (1991) and Roskell (2013) identify a number of categories of challenges, neither explores participants' faith in response to the challenges. While not within the Latin America context, recent studies exist which explore the experience of Christian teachers in other parts of the world. In a study spanning a decade, Wong (2013) explores factors which influenced the identity formation of three western English teachers in China. Many of the factors Wong identifies match with the categories identified by Black et al. (1991). For example, Wong's category "Hand Dealt" refers to many aspects of "Work Characteristics," while "Support Network" aligns closely with "Interaction Adjustment." Yet Wong's research also provides important insight into the role of teachers' personal faith in addressing these challenges, an aspect not explored by either Black et al. (1991) or Roskell (2013). Unfortunately, none of these studies includes participants from Latin America and therefore they represent very different educational and cultural contexts than Honduras. As well, the almost exclusive focus of the

articles reflects the problem noted by Kubanyiova (2013), as the articles primarily include the voices of North American teachers teaching internationally. Scarce research explores the personal and professional challenges faced by both national and international teachers within the same setting, and none considers these participant groups within Honduras. This represents an important area for research as Honduras represents a country with both significant educational challenges and a growing role of English in society.

Methodology

A qualitative approach was suitable for this study based on the exploratory nature of the research questions. Data were gathered for this study through two different sources: focus group and individual interviews and an online questionnaire (see Appendix A – Questionnaire Questions and Interview Topics). The interviews were part of a larger study conducted at The Pines Bilingual School. This study was granted ethical clearance by Queen's University's General and Education Research Ethics Boards (Canada) and The Pines Bilingual School's Board of Directors. All English teachers at The Pines Bilingual School were invited to participate in the interviews and were provided a Letter of Information and Consent. Nine teachers participated in the interviews and all signed the Letter of Information and Consent. Teachers chose to participate in individual or focus group interviews based on their preference for interview type and their availability. Of the nine teachers, four participated in the individual interviews and five participated in the focus group interviews. For the individual teacher interviews, the interviews were split into two sessions, with each session lasting approximately 1 hour. The focus group interviews were also split into two sessions, with each session lasting approximately 90 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The online questionnaires were sent out through a social media group for English teachers in Honduras and 35 teachers completed the questionnaire. The questionnaires included a short description of the study, as well as an informal Letter of Information and Consent as part of the introduction. All questionnaires were anonymous. In total, 44 teachers participated in this study, 9 interview participants and 35 online questionnaire respondents.

In both the interviews and online questionnaire, respondents were asked to identify their faith affiliation. All interview participants self-identified as Evangelical Christians. For the online questionnaire, respondents self-identified as Evangelical Christian (80%), Catholic (3%)

or Other (17%), which included the following responses: “only Christian,” “raised Catholic now Evangelical Christian,” “an Evangelical believer,” and “a believer in God and his son”. For the purposes of this study, I will refer to participants under the umbrella term of “Christian,” acknowledging while each participant self-identified with this term, they may define this term in different ways.

All participants were also asked to identify as either a national or international teacher. International teachers indicated they were from Canada, the United States, and Trinidad and Tobago. A summary of participants by nationality and data source is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Participants by Nationality and Data Source (n=44)*

Questionnaire		Interviews	
Honduran	International	Honduran	International
10	25	3	6

While the participants taught in a variety of contexts throughout the country, the majority of teachers worked in religious and non-religious private educational settings, such as schools, universities, or language centers. Most teachers lived and worked in urban contexts.

In regards to teaching experience, 24% of teachers had taught for less than 1 year, 21% had taught for 1-2 years, 24% had taught for 3-5 years, and 31% had taught for more than 5 years. All national teachers indicated Spanish was their first language, while all international teachers indicated English was their first language.

After the data was collected, organized, and transcribed, an inductive analysis of the data was conducted. This analysis drew from aspects of the Constant Comparative Method (Boeije, 2002). This method calls for a multitude of comparisons of data which in the case of this study included the comparisons of the two groups of teachers to each other. The in-depth process of comparison allowed for the identification of instances when perspectives were similar or divergent regarding a specific finding.

Throughout the data collection and analysis, it was important to practice reflexivity by acknowledging my role as the researcher. Through a detailed research log, I reflected on my own experiences as a teacher in Honduras, and identified how my experiences could influence this study. While my long-term involvement in bilingual schools in Honduras influenced my perspective on this study, I applied principles of trustworthiness, as outlined by Guba and

Lincoln (1982), such as credibility and dependability throughout the data collection and analysis process.

Results

Through the analysis of the data, three themes emerged as central to the experience of both national and international teachers: 1) social challenges and strategies related to living in Honduras, 2) professional challenges and strategies related to lack of support, and 3) the role of faith in teachers' personal and professional lives. For each area, converging results for both groups will first be reported, followed by any results unique to each group. At the end of this section, Table 2 provides a summary of the findings.

1. Social challenges and strategies related to living in Honduras

International Teachers

In regards to host culture challenges, international teachers focused on four main areas: communication, cultural differences, security, and personal relationships. International teachers emphasized communication as one of the primary barriers they faced in both their professional and their personal lives. They expressed difficulties in communicating with students, parents and other school personnel. One teacher said, "The most challenging part for me was the feeling of isolation that the language barrier brought to all aspects of life." Others mentioned more subtle aspects of communication, such as, "yes does not always mean yes in Honduras." Teachers also noted strategies to address this language barrier, such as taking Spanish classes, immersing themselves in Spanish-only situations and being willing to make mistakes.

In their discussions of cultural differences, international teachers discussed a number of difficulties, including culture shock, and adjusting to different cultural values. In terms of addressing these cultural barriers, teachers employed two primary approaches. First, they actively learned more about the culture by asking other international teachers who had more experience. Secondly, they tried to adapt to certain cultural norms. One teacher explained how she was adapting to Honduras by learning when plans changed to "just roll with it and not worry about it," a reflection of the cultural norm of less rigid planning in Honduras.

International teachers also emphasized security concerns. They stated they had learned to deal with these concerns by not leaving their homes at night and being with trustworthy people.

One experienced teacher said, “Security will be an ongoing issue, so choosing not to allow fear to paralyze me and at the same time trying to use common sense to keep as safe as possible. And of course, lots of prayer.” While some teachers noted safety as a primary challenge, others noted it in regards to its potential impact on their social life. Many teachers felt their social lives were limited compared to their home countries, as there were more restrictions on their personal freedoms. When asked the greatest challenge she faced living in Honduras, one teacher said, “Not having a car or the freedom to do whatever I want when I want.”

While some international teachers focused on the challenges of their new social environment, others focused on missing relationships in their home countries. One teacher noted, “The most challenging part has been doing life without the people I am closest to.” While teachers struggled with adapting to a new social environment, many had identified coping strategies. In many cases, teachers took a two-prong approach by establishing a new community, and staying connected to close relationships in their home countries. Teachers intentionally developed relationships with Honduran families and embraced opportunities to enjoy the country and people. Many teachers saw their new church as playing a key role, and believed getting involved in a local church had helped them find a new community of friends. Teachers also prioritized communicating with family and friends at home through various forms of technology, such as social media and video calling.

While teachers identified strategies to deal with their new social environment, some still experienced a sense of isolation. One commented:

Something that I’m really struggling with is the fact that no matter how culturally aware I become and how well I can speak Spanish, I will never be fully accepted as part of the general Honduran society outside of the school, but I think that comes with living in a different culture.

While international teachers outlined a number of key challenges related to living in Honduras, they also identified effective strategies to deal with many of these challenges, such as learning Spanish, adapting to Honduran culture and establishing a new community. Some challenges though, like being fully accepted within Honduran society, seemed insurmountable.

National Teachers

Compared to international teachers, national teachers focused much less on challenges related to living in Honduras and only discussed their concerns with crime. National teachers

discussed their concern with high crime rates as whole in Honduras, but also focused on the issue of corruption within the government. Only one teacher identified a possible strategy for addressing these concerns, stating their solution simply as: “Report cases of corruption.”

In sum, in regards to challenges within Honduras, international teachers noted communication as a primary challenge. They also focused on security and cultural barriers, especially in regards to the impact of these barriers on their personal relationships. While many had developed key strategies to address these challenges, such as learning more Spanish, adapting to Honduran culture and following safety precautions, the challenges were still heavily emphasized. On the other hand, national teachers only noted crime as a concern, with a specific focus on corruption.

2. Professional Challenges and Strategies Related to Lack of Support

Both national and international teachers identified a lack of professional support as a major challenge. One aspect which both groups identified as problematic was inadequate teacher training. While some national teachers focused on the lack of opportunities to advance in their careers, most teachers emphasized how the lack of training limited their effectiveness in the classroom. Some teachers had no professional training as teachers and most teachers who were certified did not have any specific training as second-language teachers. Teachers commented that they had little feedback from the school administration on their teaching. One international teacher noted, “I think it is so hard to come in without any teaching background and without any real support.” Both national and international teachers indicated this lack of training as one of the major obstacles they faced.

While teachers acknowledged the lack of formal training provided by their schools, they also described strategies which they used to address this professional need. Many teachers mentioned the importance of asking other more experienced teachers for help. Some attended workshops, such as the TESOL Honduras national congress, which they felt was another important aspect of their professional development. One national teacher remarked, “I want to go back to school and just be prepared because sometimes I feel limited here, like something I cannot reach because there’s something that I don’t know. Maybe I could do it if I had the training.” While teachers clearly noted a lack of formal training, they addressed this need through their own personal initiatives to seek out formal and informal opportunities for training.

International Teachers

While both groups discussed a lack of training, they differed in the other concerns they shared related to inadequate professional support. International teachers discussed concerns regarding the administration of their schools but these were not discussed by national teachers. International teachers emphasized communication issues with their administrators, caused both by language barriers and by a lack of interest by administrators to clearly communicate with teachers. Some international teachers also believed that their schools did not value the English program compared to the Spanish program. One teacher explained: “When you look at the school’s mission statement, it says nothing about English.” Teachers also addressed concerns with some school policies, such as the “nivelación” system which allowed students who had failed a semester to write make-up exams. While teachers disagreed with these policies, they also recognized in many cases the policies were made at a national level and their school administrators were responsible only for their implementation. In regards to strategies, teachers did not describe any strategies to deal with issues related to administration.

National Teachers

While national teachers did not discuss concerns regarding their school administration, they did reflect on a perceived undervaluing of education as a whole within Honduras. Teachers stated insufficient financial resources were invested in education in both the private and public sector. As an example, teachers stated they were often not provided with adequate resources for their classes. They addressed this challenge through buying the materials themselves or if they were not available for purchase or too costly, they would create the materials themselves. Teachers also believed their work was undervalued, as demonstrated by their salary. While teachers expressed concerns regarding their low salaries, they did not discuss any practical means to resolve this issue. Some teachers acknowledged their low salary but also indicated money was not a primary motivator for teaching. One teacher simply stated: “I teach for love, not for money.” National teachers believed education as a whole was not respected within Honduras, as demonstrated by the lack of monetary investment in teachers or resources.

In sum, national and international teachers indicated a lack of support in their roles as teachers. While both groups noted a serious lack of training from their schools, they also identified key strategies they employed to support their professional growth, such as attending conferences. International teachers also indicated concerns with the leadership of their schools,

while national teachers focused on the undervaluing of education as a whole in Honduras.

3. Role of Faith in Personal and Professional Lives

Many national and international teachers discussed the role their faith played both in their teaching and in their personal lives. Teachers from both groups expressed a high level of freedom to talk about their faith and pray with students in both public and private school settings. While most teachers saw their faith playing an important role in their lives, specific aspects of faith differed between the two groups.

International Teachers

International teachers discussed the role of faith in their personal lives and in their English classes. Many international teachers linked their faith with their decision to come to Honduras to teach and some stated it was the only reason why they continued to teach in Honduras. One teacher noted: “I have come here to serve ... if it wasn’t for this spiritual mission, I likely would have buckled under the culture shock and hightailed it back to Canada.” Another new teacher echoed a similar sentiment, explaining, “God is the only reason I do not pack my bags and go home.” While many indicated a sense of calling kept them in Honduras, they also recognized that through teaching in Honduras, their faith had grown as they had learned to depend on God through daily challenges. Others indicated their relationship with God provided the needed strength for each day. One teacher said, “Most days feel like they may never end and the obstacles never end but having my hope and faith in the Lord, I don’t have to focus on the difficulties I face.” Many international teachers indicated their faith both brought them to Honduras and provided strength for their daily trials, and in fact grew them through the challenges they faced.

International teachers expressed contrasting opinions on the relationship of their faith to their English classes. Many teachers viewed teaching as an opportunity to serve others. One teacher wrote, “I see every day as an opportunity to serve the Lord and show these children a little bit of Christ’s love while teaching them a practical life skill, like English.” Teachers described the opportunity to help students better their lives through English which they hoped would have a positive impact on their communities. While many teachers emphasized the teaching of English as an outpouring of their desire to serve others, a few teachers viewed English classes solely as a means to share Christ. One teacher explained, “The English classes

were just a way to build relationships with Hondurans in order to share the love of Jesus.” While this teacher does not state whether proselytizing occurred during English classes, this viewpoint approaches a breach of ethical conduct, especially if the teacher was prioritizing evangelism over a professional commitment as a teacher.

National Teachers

In their descriptions of the role of faith, national teachers focused on the impact of faith on their personal lives, their relationships with students and sharing Christian values within the classroom. Like their international counterparts, national teachers noted the importance of faith in providing strength for their position as teachers. Teachers believed their faith helped them to persevere when they felt like giving up. One Honduran teacher stated that she asked “God for strength and patience to overcome all the challenges that we have as teachers each week.” National teachers also emphasized the impact of their faith on their relationships with students. Teachers drew from their Christian values when students shared personal issues with them. One teacher noted faith “helped me not to judge and to understand my students’ backgrounds.” Finally, national teachers discussed the integration of their faith in their English classes through teaching about Christian values. One national teacher said, “I try to use any opportunity I have to share the good news of what a life in Christ is all about, promoting honesty, love, compassion and respect.”

National teachers drew from their faith to face the challenges in their professional lives, to support and empathize with their students and to promote Christian values within their classrooms. International teachers also discussed the strength their faith provided to face daily challenges, but they also focused on what they defined as a calling to teach in Honduras. While most international teachers saw teaching English as an opportunity to serve others, a few problematically viewed it as only a means to share about Christianity.

In sum, teachers discussed challenges related to living in Honduras and the lack of professional support within their schools. In some cases, national and international teachers identified a number of specific strategies for dealing with these challenges. In other cases, teachers had been able to identify challenges, but had not developed effective strategies to address them. Teachers also discussed the role of their faith in facing some of these challenges. Table 2 outlines these and other important findings in an ‘at a glance’ summary.

Table 2. *Summary of Important Findings*

Social Challenges and Strategies Related to Living in Honduras		
	<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Strategies</i>
<i>International Teachers</i>	Communication	• increase their Spanish proficiency
	Cultural differences	• learn more about Honduran culture • adapt to cultural norms
	Limited personal relationships	• establishing a community within Honduras • remaining connected to home country
<i>International and National Teachers</i>	Security	• follow appropriate precautions • be with trustworthy people • prayer
<i>National Teachers</i>	Corruption	• report cases of corruption
Professional Challenges and Strategies Related to Lack of Support		
	<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Strategies</i>
<i>International Teachers</i>	School administration	
<i>International and National Teachers</i>	Inadequate teacher training	• asking more experienced teachers for help • seeking out professional development or further education
<i>National Teachers</i>	Undervaluing of education in Honduras	• using personal finances to purchase resources • focusing on non-financial motivation to teach
The Role of Faith in Teachers' Personal and Professional Lives		
	<i>Personal</i>	<i>Professional</i>
<i>International Teachers</i>	• personal faith influenced decision to come to Honduras • faith has grown through living in Honduras	• teaching as opportunity to serve others • English classes as means to share Christ
<i>International and National Teachers</i>		• faith provides strength for challenges of teaching • enjoy freedom to talk about their faith and pray with students
<i>National Teachers</i>		• faith informs their interactions with students

Discussion

As Table 2 indicates above, national and international teachers shared many similarities in the challenges they faced in Honduras, as well as demonstrating some contrasting opinions. Three main discussion points will now be explored in relationship to the literature: 1) the value of English education in Honduras, 2) faith not informing social injustice, and 3) faith informing classroom practices.

The Value of Education

While national and international teachers shared a concern over the lack of professional support, they focused on two different aspects. International teachers emphasized key concerns in regards to school administration, while national teachers did not discuss their specific

administrators. This finding echoes Roskell's (2013) results, as she indicates the primary reason international teachers terminated their contract was difficulties with the administration which limited their ability to teach effectively. While international teachers' criticisms in this study do not go as far as Alley (1996), who states Honduran bilingual schools take advantage of their teachers through unfair school practices, they did feel unsupported and isolated within their schools. This sense of disconnect between the Spanish and English programs has been identified as problematic at other bilingual schools in Latin America. Both Hamel (2008) and de Mejía and Hélot (2008) argue that often Spanish and English programs in Latin America operate as two separate schools, with little integration between the programs. Yet national English teachers did not describe the same disconnect between the Spanish and English programs at their schools, though they did believe education as a whole, and their work specifically, was undervalued.

It may be that both groups' concerns are based on the undervaluing of education but from different viewpoints. International teachers described it on a small scale, as they believed their administrators did not prioritize communication with them nor was the English program valued within their schools. National teachers, on the other hand, considered the bigger picture, believing education was undervalued within Honduran society as whole, not just within their specific school settings. While at first the international and national teachers appear to have conflicting views, upon deeper reflection it seems likely the views are complementary, with international teachers looking through a microscope and national teachers through a wide angle lens. This finding seems to echo the challenges identified in the UNICEF (2013) report in regards to the state of education in Honduras. While teachers identified clear challenges and a concern over the value of education by Honduran society, both international and national teachers in this study shared a clear desire and commitment to work toward positive change. In looking forward, the question is likely not whether or not challenges exist, especially in the area of English language teaching, but instead to focus on how to support teachers in order to empower them to improve the educational situation in Honduras. The work of the recently established TESOL International affiliate, Honduran English Language Teachers' Association (HELTA), is evidence of important steps forward in providing teachers with the resources and professional development required to address the pressing educational challenges they currently face.

Faith Not Informing Social Injustice

In this study, both national and international teachers mentioned crime as a key challenge of living in Honduras. In their discussions, both groups focused primarily on how crime impacted them personally. Yet, neither group discussed the effects that crime or other devastating social issues, such as illegal emigration to the United States, has on their students, their colleagues or society as a whole. Wong (2013) notes a similar tendency for international English teachers to, at times, ignore the realities of their host country's social and political situation, based on her research in China. She states that international teachers must reflect more deeply on these issues within their local context. Yet in the present study national teachers also did not talk about the impact of these major societal issues on their teaching. This exclusion by both national and international Christian teachers may reflect a view described by Canagarajah (2009), in which some Christians see the Good News as simply a means to personal salvation. In contrast, in many parts of the developing world, evangelicals see the Gospel as the regeneration of all aspects of life, and evangelicals play an active role in criticizing injustices in their countries (Canagarajah, 2009). Yet, in this study, neither national nor international Christian teachers made a connection between their faith and the injustices of Honduran society. This perspective may reflect a personal faith which focuses primarily on salvation over a renewal of society. On the other hand, teachers' lack of discussion may be related to a lack of awareness, in which case teachers could be educated about issues of social justice and how to incorporate these topics into their classrooms. Schools could also provide opportunities for students, families and staff to share and pray about some of the personal concerns and challenges they face living in Honduras. While conclusions cannot be drawn based on participants not discussing a certain topic, further engagement of national and international English teachers in issues of social justice is likely needed in Honduras and in other contexts.

Faith Informing Classroom Practices

While participants in this study generally did not talk about how their faith informed their views of societal problems on a large scale, they did talk about how their faith informed their practices within the English classroom, though some clear differences were noted. National teachers presented a more congruent description of their practices, emphasizing how their faith helped them in their relationship with their students and how they incorporated Christian values

through their teaching. Many international teachers saw teaching English as an opportunity to serve their students and in turn help the communities where they lived.

These practices of national and international teachers are in line with other studies, such as Wicking's (2014) research on Christian English teachers in Japan, where teachers had a clear sense of the line between their role as a professional and their faith as a Christian. In contrast, a small group of international teachers here described their English classes only as a means to share Christ with their students. While they did not state whether or not they proselytized in their classrooms, a primary emphasis on evangelism is problematic. Within the field of TESOL, many have criticized Christian English teachers for using English language teaching as a cover for their real purpose of evangelism (e.g., Pennycook & Coutand-Marin, 2003). Wong (2009) criticizes this approach, stating those teaching English as only a means to evangelize, "devalue the profession, their students, and their primary calling as Christ followers" (p. 93).

Robison (2009) states Christian teachers should be as transparent as possible with stakeholders about any religious content in their classes. Robison argues this transparency is required of all teachers, not just Christian teachers, as every teacher brings personal philosophies and beliefs to the classroom which will impact their practices and potentially influence their students. In order to ensure this type of transparency, Christian schools should clearly outline the type of religious content which is included in both classes and special events to all parents and students. While teachers in this study indicated their schools were generally open to classroom discussions about faith regardless of religious affiliation, teachers should still be aware of expressing their personal opinions and beliefs in a way that reflects professional ethical codes. The majority of teachers in this study indicated a clear awareness of appropriate guidelines for sharing their faith and demonstrated how their faith supported their work as a professional English teacher. Schools could promote this culture of reflexivity by providing opportunities for all staff and students to regularly reflect on their personal beliefs and consider how these beliefs may impact their personal relationships and school interactions.

While national teachers emphasized how their faith influenced their relationships with students and how they incorporated Christian values in their teaching, international teachers were divided into two contrasting approaches. Many international teachers described teaching English through the lens of service while a minority viewed it as a method to open a door to evangelism. Neither group discussed the intersection of their faith and the social issues of Honduras, such as

family disintegration tied to extremely high rates of emigration. Discussions of justice or advocacy for students were notably absent from their consideration of the challenges they faced.

It is important to note that while certain patterns emerged in regards to discussions about teachers' faith, their individual beliefs likely vary widely. When asked to describe their faith background, 83% of questionnaire respondents selected one of the two options provided, Evangelical Christian or Catholic. These participants did not provide additional information on their faith background, though a section was available to add further information. An in-depth exploration of individual teachers' beliefs, convictions and religious practices was outside of the scope of this study, but is a key area for ongoing research.

In sum, while findings from this study aligned with other similar studies in certain areas, other findings indicated discrepancies and areas for ongoing research. This study demonstrated both areas of convergence and divergence between national and international teachers. Further investigation is required to explore more deeply these differences and to understand possible factors which have led to these differences between the groups.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the challenges faced by national and international Christian English teachers in Honduras and the role of their faith in facing those challenges. While the findings from this study could help inform research in other contexts, the experiences of these international and national Christian teachers in Honduras will be unique in many ways. While there is a growing field of research into the role faith plays in the experience of English teachers, very little research has looked at the challenges faced by both international and national teachers. As well, research on the experiences of either type of teacher in Honduras is virtually non-existent. While this study begins to address this gap, more research is required to explore the challenges faced by all types of Christian English teachers around the world.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire Questions and Interview Topics

A. Selected Questionnaire Questions

- Which country are you originally from?
- Please describe your faith background.
- What have been the biggest challenges you have faced in your role as a teacher?
- How have you responded to these teaching-related challenges?
- What has been the most challenging part of living in Honduras?
- What strategies have you found helpful in dealing with these personal challenges?
- What role does your faith play in your experience as an English teacher in Honduras?

B. Selected Interview Topics

- educational and teaching background
- faith background and involvement in faith community
- areas of personal and professional growth
- teaching responsibilities and school environment
- relationships with other staff and administrators
- adaptation of teachers without an educational background in teaching
- schools' religious background and openness to faith discussions
- support available inside and outside of school
- expectations of living in Honduras versus actual experience
- cultural adjustment for international teachers

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